

ECEAP/HEAD START PILOT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What is Early Achievers? Why is it a focus of the Department of Early Learning?

Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system, is a voluntary program that supports and rewards early care and education professionals for providing high-quality care to children and families. Because so many of Washington's young children participate in early learning programs, it's important to make sure these programs provide children with the best possible start. Early Achievers will help programs offer high-quality care through training, coaching, and incentives that support high quality for children.

Early Achievers is designed to align, support and build upon other key early learning programs in Washington, particularly [WaKIDS](#), Washington's Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, and the [early learning professional development lattice](#). Creating seamless programs for children and families in Washington is key to helping all children grow, develop, and successfully transition from early childhood into early elementary school.

2. What is the Head Start and ECEAP Early Achievers Pilot?

From mid-2012 through the end of the year, DEL is working with a small number of Head Start and ECEAP providers to test and refine policies and procedures that encourage Head Start and ECEAP participation in Early Achievers and that provide opportunities for Head Start/ECEAP to become "resource centers" that support all Early Achievers participants.

Early Achievers, Washington's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)

This is an exciting time to be in early learning in Washington! As a result of Washington winning the [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge](#) grant in December 2011, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) will expand [Early Achievers](#), Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), statewide, beginning July 1, 2012 and will serve the entire state within one year. Please check our website to see how Early Achievers will increase quality early learning opportunities in your community.

3. Why include Head Start and ECEAP in Early Achievers?

One of the challenges included in the Race to the Top grant application was for states to create and implement quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) that include a broad range of programs for children, including licensed child care, Head Start and state-funded preschool programs. Head Start and ECEAP participation in Early Achievers is a key component of Washington's Race to the Top strategy because:

- Children in Washington are cared for in many settings throughout their early learning years, and early learning professionals often work in a variety of settings during their careers, including Head Start, ECEAP and child care. Early Achievers allows parents and staff to have a common understanding about high-quality services as children and staff move between

settings. Early Achievers includes all early care programs, including licensed child care, tribal/military certified, and Head Start/ECEAP, to create a statewide system that supports care for children along a standard continuum of quality.

- ▶ Head Start and ECEAP have experience, expertise and resources to provide high-quality services for children and families and a long-standing commitment to quality improvement. We have an opportunity to leverage this experience to strengthen Early Achievers through the creation of resource centers. High-performing Head Start and ECEAP providers will be able to serve as resource centers in order to share opportunities and expertise with licensed child care providers and the families they serve in their communities. This may take the form of trainings, materials, resources and events at local, regional, or state levels. This feature is a unique component of Washington's approach outlined in its Race to the Top application that has received national attention as a notable strategy.
- ▶ Many elements of the Early Achievers Quality Standards, such as family support and engagement, assessment, curriculum and individualization, are modeled after components in Head Start and ECEAP. This means alignment is a natural fit and the Quality Standards represent an approach in which Head Start and ECEAP resources and expertise can be shared to enhance supports for Early Achievers participants.
- ▶ Head Start and ECEAP programs serve the highest-need children in Washington. Helping them prepare for kindergarten and beyond is a fundamental component to closing the achievement gap in our state.

4. What do we intend to accomplish with the Head Start and ECEAP pilot?

There are two primary goals of the pilot:

- ▶ To develop streamlined process for Head Start and ECEAP participation in Early Achievers which consider existing practices and monitoring to avoid duplication where possible including:
 - Testing a designated rating for Head Start/ECEAPs entering the system and a rating process for those wishing to pursue higher ratings;
 - Examining and defining the roles of both grantees/contractors and individual Head Start and ECEAP sites in Early Achievers; and
 - Testing and implementing Early Achievers registration and application functions in MERIT specific to Head Start and ECEAP.
- ▶ Participants will provide input to the development of these processes, test elements of implementation and provide input for refinement of process prior to full scale implementation.
 - To refine the resource center concept to facilitate the sharing of Head Start and ECEAP resources and expertise to support the broader Early Achievers system, including establishing requirements and expectations of potential resource centers.

5. Who is participating in the Head Start and ECEAP Early Achievers pilot?

Recruitment and enrollment for the pilot is at the grantee/contractor level. The following Head Start and ECEAP grantees/contractors are participating in the pilot:

| Name | Counties Served | Children served |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Community Colleges of Spokane | Spokane | HS: 879 ECEAP: 670 |
| Denise Louie Education Center | King | HS: 244 ECEAP: 0 |
| Puget Sound ESD (ESD 121) | King, Pierce | HS: 1,960 ECEAP: 2,194 |
| Kitsap Community Resources | Kitsap | HS: 298 ECEAP: 85 |
| Lower Columbia Community College | Cowlitz | HS: 320 ECEAP: 178 |
| Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe | Clallam | HS: 64 ECEAP: 0 |
| Rural Resources Community Action Program | Pend, Oreille, Stevens | HS: 154 ECEAP: 32 |
| St. James Family Center | Wahkiakum | HS: 0 ECEAP: 24 |
| Washington State Migrant Council | Grant, Walla Walla, Yakima* | HS: 3,256 ECEAP: 831 |
| **Head Start total: 7,175 ECEAP total: 4,014 | | |

*This organization has services in other counties but only these are included in the pilot.

**Head Start includes Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start, AI/AN Early Head Start and Migrant-Seasonal Head Start.

6. How were the pilot participants chosen?

DEL strategically planned outreach and recruitment of participants based on:

- ▶ Alignment between the service area and the Early Achievers 2012 rollout regions.
- ▶ Geographic representation.
- ▶ Grantee/contractor program size.
- ▶ Program type (i.e. Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, ECEAP).
- ▶ Agency type (i.e. government agency, school system, public/private nonprofit).
- ▶ Sites that have at least 60 percent of their slots filled by a Head Start or ECEAP student; this threshold may re-evaluated during the pilot.

7. What will happen when the pilot ends?

Beginning in 2013, all Head Start and ECEAPs in Washington will be eligible to participate in Early Achievers. We will apply lessons learned during the pilot to implement a process that leverages the capacity of Head Start and ECEAP to support all participants in Early Achievers. Participation in Early Achievers is, and will continue to be, voluntary.

8. Where can I find more information?

- ▶ For more information about Early Achievers, including Quality Standards, please visit: www.del.wa.gov/care/qris/default.aspx
- ▶ For more information about the Head Start and ECEAP pilot, please contact: Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer, Head Start State Collaboration Office-Department of Early Learning, 360-725-4423, Jennifer.jennings-shaffer@del.wa.gov